

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 04453 031705Z
ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJ: DEMONSTRATION AGAINST GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY

REF: TEL AVIV 4396

1. THE APRIL 1 "PEACE NOW" RALLY IN TEL AVIV'S MAIN
SQUARE CAN BE COUNTED AS A SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING EVERY-
THING BUT ITS MAIN GOAL. THE ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES
WERE FOR THE MOST PART ATTAINED: THE ESTIMATES FOR THE
TURNOUT RANGE FROM A HIGHLY RESPECTABLE 20,000 TO AN
EXTRAORDINARY 40,000; THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE STRIKINGLY
AND REASSURINGLY "AVERAGE;" AND THE TONE SET BY THE
SPEAKERS WAS MODERATE, NON-PARTISAN, AND REASONABLE.
THE RALLY ORGANIZERS--SOME OF THE RESERVE OFFICERS WHO
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 04453 031705Z

INITIATED THE LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER BEGIN--CAN
NOW CREDIBLY CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT
THERE IS BROAD THOUGH HERETOFORE SILENT PUBLIC SUPPORT
FOR A MORE CONCILIATORY PEACE POLICY. THEY HAVE ALREADY
BEGUN TO MAKE THIS CLAIM AND ARE ALSO SAYING THAT THEY
WILL CONTINUE TO BRING HOME THIS MESSAGE IN AN INTEN-
SIFIED "PEACE NOW" CAMPAIGN.

2. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE RALLY--DIRECTLY TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION--WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY ACHIEVED, HOWEVER. IN WHAT WILL BE NOTED BY MANY AS ANOTHER PIECE OF BEGIN'S GOOD LUCK, THE TOTAL MEDIA BLACKOUT (RESULTING FROM A JOURNALISTS' STRIKE) RESTRICTED REPORTING AND COMMENT ON THE RALLY TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT IMPACT ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES WAS LARGELY VITIATED. IF AN EARLY STRIKE SETTLEMENT WERE TO OCCUR, THE CAMPAIGN LEADERS MAY STILL BE ABLE TO FOCUS MEDIA ATTENTION ON THE RALLY WHILE IT IS FRESH NEWS AND RECOUP A PART OF THEIR LOSSES. (ARTICLES IN THE WEEKEND SUPPLEMENTS OF A NUMBER OF FRIDAY'S NEWSPAPERS, ALL SYMPATHETICALLY PORTRAYING THE "IDEALISTIC YOUNG RESERVISTS" WHO ARE LEADING THE EFFORT, ATTEST TO CURRENT PRESS INTEREST IN THE STORY.)

3. DUE TO THE MEDIA BLBACKOUT, PRIMARY IMMEDIATE IMPACT WILL NECESSARILY BE ON MKS. FOR WHILE THE "PEACE NOW" STRATEGY INVOLVES GOING DIRECTLY TO THE PUBLIC, WHICH IN TURN IS EXPECTED TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND KNESSET, IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME REVERBERATIONS ARE ALREADY BEING FELT WITHIN THE KNESSET AND THE PARTIES. TWO MINISTERS HAVE PUBLICLY REACTED WITH UNEXPECTED SHARPNESS. FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH STATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT REJECTS (PARTISAN) "POLITICAL MEETINGS WHICH TAKE ON THE GUISE OF OFFICERS' MEETINGS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 04453 031705Z

THERE IS NO PLACE FOR THE TERM 'MILITARY' IN POLITICS: THIS HAS THE SMELL OF A PUTSCH." SUCH CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICY, HE SAID, IS UNFOUNDED AND ONLY REDUCES THE CHANCES FOR PEACE, AS IT ENCOURAGES SADAT TO BE INTRANSIGENT. JUSTICE MINISTER TAMIR CHARGED THAT THE DEMONSTRATORS SEEK AN IMMEDIATE AND UNCONDITIONAL WITHDRAWAL TO THE JUNE 1967 BORDERS AND A "TOTAL CAPITULATION TO SADAT'S DICTATES."

4. SUCH HARSHNESS, PARTICULARLY COMING FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MORE DOVISH ELEMENTS OF THE COALITION, SMACKS OF DEFENSIVENESS, DERIVING FROM ANXIETY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THIS KIND OF CAMPAIGN ON COALITION UNITY AND SUPPORT OF BEGIN'S FOREIGN POLICY. THE EFFECT OF THIS CAMPAIGN ON THOSE WHO MIGHT BE CONSIDERED ITS "NATURAL" SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE COALITION--FOREIGN POLICY FENCE-SITTERS WITHIN THE DMC AND DOVISH LIBERAL AND NRP MKS--BEARS WATCHING. LEWIS

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